

FOREST LEGACY PROGRAM

PROJECT SCORING GUIDANCE

(July 11, 2006- updated)

Introduction:

This document provides guidance to the National Review Panel on how to score individual Forest Legacy Program (FLP) projects, including additional clarification on the core national criteria, project readiness and other evaluation considerations used in this process. The outcome from the National Review Panel will be a ranked and prioritized list of FLP projects for submission to the Office of Management and Budget for consideration in the President's Budget. Its objectives are to:

- Provide a clear and defensible ranking process that can be articulated easily to program participants and partners; and
- Ensure fair, equitable and thorough review of all projects by the National Panel

National Project Selection:

Region/Area/IITF Role:

- Work with States to produce highly competitive FLP projects
- Work with States to produce projects that are "Ready"
- Work with States to assure that all pertinent project information is in FLIS
- Learn and understand project details
- Assure that projects meet State AON objectives
- Confirm that projects have been reviewed and evaluated by the State Forest Stewardship Coordinating Committee
- Assure that projects comply with June 30, 2003 FLP Implementation Guidelines
- Work with States to advance top projects to the national selection process

Washington Office Role:

- Work with regions/area/IITF to produce highly competitive FLP submissions
- Ensure that project selections meet congressional direction
- Ensure that project selections meet national program goals

National Review Panel Role:

- Score projects using the national core criteria (Importance, Threatened, and Strategic)
- Apply "Readiness" criteria and organize projects on that criteria
- Develop a National List of ranked projects

National Core Criteria:

Importance – The environmental, social, and economic public benefits gained from the protection and management of the property. More points will be given to projects that demonstrate multiple public benefits at the national or multi-state scale. This criterion reflects the ecological assets and the economic and social values

conserved by the project and the scale of people's interest in its protection. It is meant to assess the attributes to be conserved and who is receiving those benefits.

- Outstanding/Exceptional value – 30 points – The project's attributes are of national or multi-state interest;
- Very Good – 20 points – The project's attributes are of state interest;
- Medium / Average – 10 points – The project's attributes are of local interest; or
- Low – 0 points – The project's attributes are unclear or unspecified.

For examples of outstanding projects, please refer to the briefing sheets, in the Forest Legacy Information System (FLIS), for projects that ranked high on the 2007 President's budget request.

Attributes to consider:

Specified in FLP Authorization and FLP Strategic Direction

Forestry – Landowner demonstrates sound forest management and/or contributes to the resource-based economy for a community or region. (Strategic Direction Goal 2.3)

Threatened or Endangered Species Habitat – The site has known individuals and/or habitat for designated rare, threatened or endangered plants and animals. In most cases, federally listed species will be given more consideration than state-only listed species. (Strategic Direction Goal 2.3)

Fish, Wildlife, Plants, and Unique Forest Communities– The site contains unique forest communities and/or important fish or wildlife habitat as specified by a wildlife conservation plan or strategy. (Strategic Direction Goal 2.3)

Water Supply Protection – Contiguous riparian area, forested wetlands, shorelines, river systems, sensitive watershed lands, buffer to public drinking water supply or an aquifer recharge area. (Strategic Direction Goal 2.1)

Public Access – The property has full or limited access, and may include specific use restrictions. (Strategic Direction Goal 2.3)

Specified in FLP Authorization

Scenic – The site is located within a viewshed of a formally designated scenic feature or area (such as trail, river, or highway)

Historic/Cultural – Formally documented cultural or historical features are located on site

Threatened - This criterion estimates the likelihood for conversion and considers the following:

- The degree of legal protections that currently exists on the property (e.g. current zoning or existing easements) and if these protections remove the threat of conversion.
- Landowners circumstances (e.g. good land steward interested in conserving land, property held in an estate, aging landowner and future use of property by heirs is uncertain, property is up for sale or has a sale pending, landowner has received purchase offers, etc.)
- Adjacent land use changes (rate of development growth and conversion, rate of population growth, rate of change in ownership, etc).

Likelihood of conversion to non-forest uses.

- Imminent/Likely – 30 points [Circumstances indicate conversion may occur soon or in the somewhat distant future: land has a subdivision plan, landowner has received offers from developers, landowner has sold off subdivisions of the property, land is located in a rapidly developing area, landowners are aged or nearby comparable land has been recently sold for development.]
- Possible – 15 points [Circumstances indicate conversion could occur within 10 years: Land is in an attractive location for development such as waterfront or an outdoor recreation area.]
- Unlikely any time soon (beyond 10 years) – 0 points

If property has been acquired by a third party at the request of the state, threatened will be evaluated based on the situation prior to the third party acquisition. Additional consideration will be given to projects that will prohibit any additional structures or subdivision of the property.

Strategic - The project fits within a larger conservation plan, strategy, or initiative as designated by either a government or non-governmental entity and is strategically linked to enhance previous conservation investments (either FLP or other investments). This considers reflects the project's relevance or relationship to conservation efforts on a broader perspective. (FLP Strategic Direction 1.1, 1.2, and 1.3)

- 30 points- A key property in a formally developed national or multi-state conservation effort.
- 20 points- A key property in a formally developed state plan or focused protection strategy.
- 10 points- Will lead to additional conservation action locally.
- 0 points- It is an isolated tract with no known connection at this time.

A map helps illustrate the strategic components of the property.

Additional Considerations

1. Where did the State rank the project?
2. What has been the performance of the State program? What is the average time for a state to close projects?
3. What is its current state project backlog and capacity?
4. What is the cost share of the project? Does it provide good leverage? When will it be made toward the project?
5. Was the project funded in a prior year?
6. Is this the first time the state has competed for a project?
7. Project Readiness- the degree of due diligence applied and the certainty of a successful FLP project. Credit will only be given to those items completed, not anticipated completion.
 - Level 0 – 0 items completed
 - Level 1 – 1 items completed
 - Level 2 – 2 items completed

- Level 3 – 3 item completed
- Level 4 – 4 items completed
- Level 5 – 5 items completed

To demonstrate project readiness, completed items need to be specified (including completion date) in FLIS:

- Documented information to support cost estimate, such as completed market analysis or preliminary appraisal.
- Landowner and easement holder has agreed to easement or fee acquisition conditions.
- Cost Share commitment from a specified source.
- Signed option or purchase and sales agreement held by the state or at the request of the state. **OR** At the request of the State, conservation easement or fee title held by a third party.
- Completed title search.
- Completed stewardship plan or multi-resource management plan.